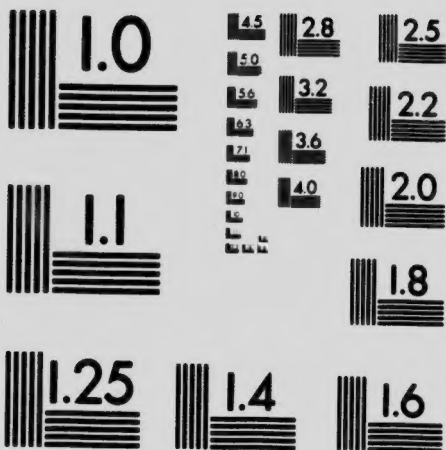
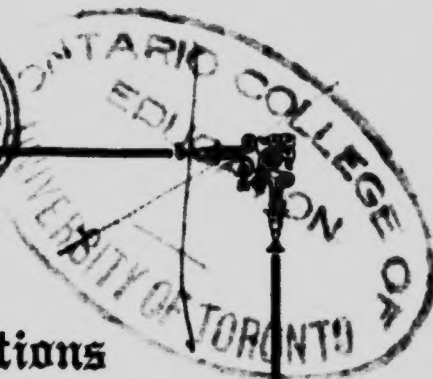




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**A Study of the Conditions
of the Libraries of the
Niagara District."**

BY

GEORGE B. SNYDER, M.D.

President, 1911



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*The Paper read at the Niagara District Library Institute
Convention held in Port Colborne on October 24, 1911.
Ordered to be printed and distributed by resolution
passed at the Convention.*



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"A STUDY OF THE CONDITIONS OF THE LIBRARIES OF THE NIAGARA DISTRICT."

BY GEO. B. SNYDER, M.D., RIDGEWAY



Since our election to office one year ago our Executive has endeavored to get in touch with every Library in the District. There are 25 of them. Haldimand 9; Welland 8; Lincoln 8.

We have tried to get each Library more interested in their work and tried to get them to send one or more representatives to this annual convention. I think we have been successful, at least in some small degree, and it is shown by the attendance here today and by the interest and enthusiasm of the delegates. In 1909 ten libraries were represented at convention, and in 1910 seventeen libraries were represented, and this year eighteen.

The Executive concluded that the best way to stimulate the interest of the different Boards would be to bring before their minds a list of questions touching on nearly every point of library work, so that in reviewing these questions they might see what other libraries were doing and see wherein they themselves were doing well and wherein they were deficient when compared with what other libraries were doing. We divided the libraries among different members of the Executive Board, asking them to visit the libraries allotted to them and fill out the report, with the help of one or more of the members of that Board and their Librarian. We have a goodly number of these reports completed, and from these reports I have composed my paper.

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Some of the libraries were very indifferent about the report, and they will pardon me for giving the opinion of one of the Executive regarding their position. I think his opinion is significant. He said: "I went personally to X, and after about two hours I found the librarian, but could not get anything done. He agreed to see to the completion of the report and return it to me. He said he would also attend to the report for Y, which was nearby in the country. I forwarded Z their report with a letter and full instructions as to what we desired but I have not as yet got any further word or report from any of these three libraries. I think there is not much interest taken in them. In X I went to five or six leading business men and they did not know an officer of the library. It is almost useless to go a fishing in such cases."

Now my own opinion is that such libraries as these are pretty dead and are in great necessity of studying our report or some other report well and in need of acting on some of the suggestions.

We all realize right well and must not forget, that every library has its own individual conditions and difficulties and the best of us are liable to grow sleepy at times. Nevertheless that should not prevent the ones of us who are awake now from trying to wake up the others. They can return the compliment by trying to wake us up when we get sleepy. I think we can and ought to be a mutual help and stimulus to one another in these matters.

We asked the libraries a long list of questions. But three of these are important, so I shall read them and their answers to you.

Question 70. How do you advertise your library?

(A). We don't advertise in any way, either by lists of new books in the paper or in any other way.

(B) We send lists of new books to the local papers but do not advertise in any other way.

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(C). We send lists of our new books to the local papers.

(D). We co-operate with our schools by lists of certain classes of books.

Notice of new books in the library.

Lists of books on current topics are sent to the local papers.

Lists of books are sent to the factories to be posted up in conspicuous places in the factory.

Notices of books are posted up on the notice board in the library.

(E). We have a sign on the door of the library and send lists of new books to the local papers.

(F) List of new books in the local papers.

(G). Don't advertise.

(H). We have a bright light on the front of our library.

Lists of new books in the local papers.

Lists of new books on the notice board in the library.

(I). We have public meetings for the benefit of the library.

(J). We have cards nailed up in public places to attract the visitors.

We have a lighted sign on the library.

Lists of new books for the local papers.

Lists of books on current topics for the papers.

Lists on the notice board in the library.

(K). Lists of new books for the local papers.

Lists of books on current topics for the local paper.

Lighted sign.

Question 19. Do you know of any reason why your library is not more popular and more used?

(A.) No answer.

(B) Our library would be more popular if sufficient funds were available to procure the latest books.

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(C). The cutting of the government grant from dollar for dollar spent for books down to 50 per cent. gradually cut down our receipts to less and less each year. till we could not pay the expenses of keeping our reading room open all the time. Then our income continued to lessen till we could not buy many new books, and now we are a back number.

(D). Too many newspapers and farm journals are taken by the people around here, and they have no time left to read our library books.

(E). Our library is not located in our business centre,

(F). Our library is located in a store. This is bad, for it both interferes with the business of the store and with the work of the library, especially if it is a busy store.

Improper classification.

Lack of funds discourage the Board.

Have to beg from our Municipal Council.

(G). All ratepayer in our school section are members, free of charge, by reason of the School Section paying \$25.00 per year to the Library. This is understood to be a subscription for membership fees.

The Municipal Council also pays a grant of \$50.00.

(H). We think our library is well used. being so close as it is to two other good libraries.

(I). Board leaves too much work to the Librarian, without keeping track of it.

Members of the Board do not keep active enough and in close enough touch with the library work.

Lack of funds,

(J). We are popular now.

(H). No answer.

(L). Indifference on the part of the people.

(M). A free library would do better.

The books we have do not appeal to our large foreign element - live here and to our rough labor class of people.

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Question 60. Along what lines do you think your library can improve.

(A). No answer.

(B). The opening of a reading room in connection with our library would be a great advantage, but our building is too small for that purpose.

(C). New location for our library.

Better municipal grant.

(D). No answer.

(E). More stories for children with scrapbooks and pictures.

More reference works.

More mechanics works.

(F). New quarters.

New classification.

More new books.

(G). Trouble to get the Directors to put practical work in as Directors.

Handicapped in finance since the government grant was changed.

(H). Cannot improve much at present as we are doing well.

We would like to have our library a free library and open all day.

(I). More energy on the part of every individual member of the Board.

(J). A librarian who reads and who knows the books would help us.

(K). No answer.

(L). Fiction issue is too great, but we expect a gradual improvement under our new librarian.

(M). We are in the town hall and a separate building of our own would help us.

Better library equipment.

A new set of officers whose time is not all taken up with their own business.

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I find 25 libraries in the district. Of these four are Free Public Libraries, under part 1 in the Act, St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Ridgeway and Port Colborne, and 21 are Library Associations, under part 2 of the Act.

HALDIMAND.

Caledonia.	Dunnville.
Victoria.	Cheapside.
Canfield.	Hagersville.
Cayuga	Jarvis.
	Nanticooke.

WELLAND.

Fonthill.	Welland.
Thorold.	Bridgeburg.
	Fort Erie.

LINCOLN.

Beamsville.	Atterden.
Merriton.	Grantham.
Smithville.	Grimsby.
	Niagara-on-the-Lake.

One new one is now being organized at Stevensville, in Welland county, and we have their representatives here today. They are making a good start.

Welland is thinking seriously of a new Carnegie Library. They are now housed in their Town Hall. We wish them success. All she needs is for one or two men to put their shoulder to the wheel and keep at it. Get the enthusiasm aroused and there will soon be a new library.

Grimsby and Thorold are building new libraries.

One noteworthy feature is that a good portion of our libraries have ambitions for improvement in one way or another, as shown by their answers to the questions. Some want new classification; some new quarters; some new buildings; some more alive boards; and some want better librarians, and they will get them. Some want more money, and they will get that, too, if they get to work and hunt it up.

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Value of Our Libraries.

Our 25 libraries represent a good deal of wealth. Every one of our libraries has its assets, but not one has a cent of liabilities so far as I can learn. The smallest library assets are about \$1700 and the largest about \$50,000. These include books, furnishings and buildings. I should think the total assets of this district would be about \$125,000. Five of these libraries own their own building, Bridgeburg, St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Ridgeway and Fonthill. This amount of money represents about 125,000 books, or about one book for each dollar of assets represented. I believe this would make about one dollar and one book for each member of the population of the district, but out of the population only about 7000 persons read our books. That is, there is \$18 and 18 books in use for each person who is now using our libraries.

I find but very few of our libraries own their own building. Many more could do so to their own advantage. They are anxious for a new building but are afraid to undertake the work. A little energy on the part of a few members of the Board, to work up an enthusiasm, then follow by plans and public subscriptions, as Ridgeway did three years ago, when she raised \$1200 and built and equipped a new and neat building. Ridgeway is a small place, unincorporated, of about 600 population. Other small places could do the same. When you own your own building you can locate it centrally, where it will be most accessible and most used. You can build it tastily and to suit your best purposes. You can have more light, and more room, and your books better arranged and the building generally better arranged for your library work. When you own your own building you have no rent to pay, which is a big item, and you are not liable to be turned out at any inconvenient time, as Ridgeway was three years ago and as Welland was threatened with last spring, and Fonthill threatened one year ago.

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Fiction is Over-done in Our Libraries.

One library spent in 1910 for books, \$150.91.

For adult fiction\$106.02

For juvenile fiction .. 34.06

Adult non-fiction\$4.31

Juvenile non-fiction ... 6.52

Total for fiction\$140.08 And non-fiction\$10.38

Number of books bought in 1910: Fiction, 155; non-fiction, 21.

Number of books read in 1910: 4577; number of fiction, 4404; number of non-fiction, 173.

The government grant for 1910 was \$42.23.

Now this is a very strong example and gives us something definite to talk from today. This library carries out the remark of the expert librarian when cataloging another library in this district. She said: "You have a beautiful collection of fiction, but you are very weak in religion."

Nearly every library in this district has a large majority of fiction in the library, a large majority of fiction read and a large majority of fiction placed in the library each year. This is carried on to such an extent that the government grant is not got in full in quite a number of our libraries. Some of these libraries are the hardest up for funds and are asking for larger government grants. They are working against their own interests in two ways, more fiction than is good for them and less grant than they desire.

One of the greatest questions we have to meet today is to counterbalance this condition. Our newspapers pander to this light stuff, our playhouses and picture shows help encourage it and pander to it. Our boys and girls sit by hours studying out those silly caricature stories of the newspapers, which are worse than nothing and worse than time wasted. Such things teach our children to appreciate what is light and worthless. Let our newspapers oppose

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such trash, and let the parents and teachers encourage the children to put their time on things of more weight, and when they grow older they will not want so much light fiction.

A Word About Government Grant.

A great many of our libraries are finding fault about the government grant. Now the government has a great many things to look after and pay for, and I think they are doing very well in regard to this matter. I do know that a great many of our libraries are not getting as large a grant as they might, because they buy too much fiction, as I have just shown you. They do this for two reasons. Some libraries are bound to have the fiction, whether they get the grant or not, and others do not understand how to spend their money to the best advantage to get the best grant out of it. Now, for the satisfaction of us all, I am going to ask the Government Inspector of Libraries, Mr. W. R. Nursey, to explain to us how that library which spent \$150.91 for books in 1910 and got a grant of \$42.23 could have spent it for the best advantage to secure the largest grant. The money to be spent for Adult Fiction, Adult Non-Fiction, Juvenile Fiction, Juvenile Non-Fiction.

Mr. Nursey's Answer.

To buy the most fiction possible and still get the largest government grant possible you will proceed as follows:

You get 50 per cent. on the adult fiction you buy on any amount up to 45 per cent. of the amount spent for non-fiction. (By non-fiction, here, the government includes adult non-fiction, juvenile fiction and juvenile non-fiction.)

This means that if you spent \$100.00 for books you can spend \$31.00, or 31 per cent. of the amount for adult fiction and get the full government grant of 50 per cent. on 't.

Now take the example of the library mentioned. They spent in all for books \$150.91. Now spend 31 per cent. of

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this for adult fiction; equals \$46.78. Then the government grant for fiction is 50 per cent. of this, is 23.39. Now spend the balance, or 69 per cent., for non-fiction, \$104.13. Then the government grant for non-fiction is 50 per cent., and equals \$52.07. Then the government grant allowed for the above for library receipts which do not exceed \$500.00 is \$15.00. Therefore the total government grant equals \$90.46.

Now this is the largest government grant that could be got on this book purchase, buying the largest amount of fiction allowed by the government on that particular amount of money spent for books.

But the way that particular library spent the \$150.91 they got only \$42.23 for their government grant and lost \$58.23, which they might have had as a grant.

The Librarian.

It is very important to have a librarian with a high education but this is not all important. I would say it was more important to have a pleasant young lady as librarian, one who is a reader and a book lover, and who is enthusiastic in the library work; also one who loves children. It is all the better if she has a good education, but in our small libraries we cannot always pay the price for the education. My opinion is that a man makes the best physician, but a woman makes the best nurse and the best Librarian. I will not cast any reflection on our men librarians. In one of our small libraries we have the library kept in a doctor's office. It has been kept there for 19 years since its organization and the doctor has been the librarian. He has furnished the place free of rent or expense and done the work as librarian free of charge during that time. I think such a man is a hero and deserves great credit.

But where changes are about to be made in the Librarian, I would suggest that great care be exercised to pick a young lady and one who will fill the position most successfully. Usually such an one can be found and secured

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If pains is taken to look her up. Librarian's salaries vary from nothing a year to \$45 a month. The usual salary where the library is kept open only part of the time, is from \$30.00 to \$75.00 a year. The pay is small, yet when you count the actual hours of work the pay is not so bad, and usually a suitable young lady can be got at that figure. I think the librarian is a very important figure in the libraries of this district, but they might play a much more important role than they are doing at the present time. Let the Boards be friendly with their librarians, and kind and encouraging to them in the work. The Board should advise the librarian and urge her to put forth greater efforts to secure the reading of more non-fiction.

Municipal Grants.

In nearly every instance the Municipal Council, either in the town or in the township, pays a grant to the library. I know of only one that does not get a municipal grant. In most cases the Municipal Council is kindly disposed to the libraries and gives them a reasonable grant. But I do think that if the Library Boards took more pains to wait on their Municipal Councils and instruct them more fully in the work and requirements of the library, the Councils would in many instances give much better grants.

The Municipal Grants in this district average from nothing to \$1700.00. I will here give a few instances which pretty well represent the whole list:

Cheapside	Nothing
Canfield	\$ 14.00
Ridgeway	40.00
Welland	200.00
Niagara Falls	1700.00

Lost Books and Fines.

Some libraries lose books because they do not keep proper record of outgoing and incoming books; also some lose books by the boys hiding books in their pockets and

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taking them out without having them recorded. I think this is rare, but the practice could easily be stopped by catching one of these fellows and making an example of him. The greatest number of books that are lost, are lost because fines are not imposed on books kept out over time. There is no urgency to bring these books back, and they are left in the homes for months till they are lost track of and forgotten.

I was surprised to find that not half of our libraries imposed fines for books kept out over time. Now I think it is one of your greatest mistakes. If you would fine some of your people it might wake them up and make them take a new interest. Every library should have a time limit for the use of a book and be very strict in collecting fines for those kept out over that time. When once in operation it gives no offence and it protects the library and saves much worry as well as serves to increase the library income. The Ridgeway Library is one of the small libraries that is very strict in this matter and we are well pleased with its operation. We lose no books, every person is satisfied, and last year we collected \$12.54 from these fines to add to our proceeds.

Reader's Cards.

I find that a great many libraries do not use reader's cards. I think reader's cards should be used in every case, and the spaces on them for books limited to say 20. Half of these only to be used for fiction and the other half left for non-fiction. Make a moderate charge for the card, say 5 or 10 cents for each card or renewal card if the first one is used up, and let all cards become void on Dec. 31st of each year. New cards must then be taken out for the new year and in this way extra proceeds are added to your library funds and every reader is more careful of his card. By the use of such a card non-fiction is encouraged to be read, for the card is a constant reminder that non-fiction

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is supposed to be read, and also a person does not care to throw away his card when it is only half used up.

Classification of Books.

Another unfortunate condition in our district is the lack of uniformity in the classification of our books. One library has a classification of its own, another has the old government classification, and some have the new system, the Dewey-Decimal & Cutter classification. The old government classification was very erroneous, for in it more than half the fiction was placed in General Literature class and other fiction was called Voyage and Travel. I think the government is more to blame in this matter than the libraries. The government demands an annual report of all the books in each library. This report has to be a detailed one showing a classified list of all the books in the library, of all the new books placed in the library, and of all the books in circulation during the year. Such a report is all right and would be very useful in comparing the work of the different libraries if the classification was the same in all the libraries. But as it is now no comparison can be made. What one reports to the government as fiction another reports as description or as travel, etc.

The government has changed the form of its book report at different times in the last few years, without giving any notice to the libraries of what kind of a report would have to be filled out at the end of the year. For that reason it is almost impossible for the secretary and librarian to fill out the report at all accurately, and I am pretty sure that many of the reports are only guess work.

I know the government has difficulties here and are endeavoring to overcome them. I believe they advocate the use of the Dewey-Decimal & Cutter system, and even pay the expenses of an expert librarian to recatalogue the books in any library that wishes to have that system installed. This is a great encouragement.

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A few of our libraries have installed the Dewey-Decimal & Cutter system and I think they are well pleased in every case. They are Niagara Falls, St. Catharines, Fort Erie, Ridgeway, Dunnville, Fonthill.

Library Funds.

One of the main notes sounded by almost every small library is "lack of funds." Now I have already by this report shown how some of this might be overcome. But where the Board is enthusiastic they will find other ways which are suitable to their own locality. Now I find that in 1910 Fort Erie raised \$191.00 by a Tag-day and Ridgeway raised \$41.00 clear of expenses by a concert.

Other commendable ways adopted in this district by the different libraries for raising money are:

Buying books in such a way as to secure the largest government grant.

Keeping a reading room open so as to secure the government grant for that.

Wait on your Municipal Councils and explain the work of your library more fully, so as to get the best grant from them.

Grants from your school boards.

Charge for reader's cards.

Collect fines for books kept out over time and for damages to books.

Excursions.

Own your own building so you have no rent to pay.

Conclusion.

In concluding this report I want to advise every library in this district to send your representatives to the Annual Library Convention. Here you meet persons who are interested in the library work in other places and who will be glad to advise and help you, and who will be glad to have you advise and help them. I think every library

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should send their librarian and also the President or one other member of the Board. I am sure of this, that there is nothing that will give you more life and interest and ambition in your library than to attend these meetings. Here you meet the Government Official, the Inspector of Libraries, who is able to answer your difficulties.

I would also like to ask the Government Inspector, Mr. Nursey, to have the government consider the matter of some kind of local inspection for each district, and have the government **MAKE AN ALLOWANCE** to pay the necessary expenses of such work.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to thank you for your kindness and patience in listening to this report.

Kindly pardon any mistakes or errors in this report.

DR. GEO. B. SNYDER,

President of Niagara District Library Institute, 1911.

